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ABSTRACT

Currently, in both developed and developing societies, there seems to be something of a "crisis of confidence" regarding the ability of formal professional training programs to impact significantly on teachers' instructional and managerial effectiveness in the classroom. From the Caribbean, this paper reports a small-scale project involving: (1) the collection of research data by trainees themselves on their students' perceptions of the dimensions of peer group popularity and unpopularity; and (2) the subsequent utilization of the findings in the psychology component of a program for graduate secondary teachers to enhance understanding of theoretical issues and their practical awareness of classroom dynamics. (Author)

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HELPING CARIBBEAN TEACHER TRAINEES TO UNDERSTAND THEIR STUDENTS

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Abstract

Currently, in both developed and developing societies, there seems to be something of a "crisis of confidence" regarding the ability of formal professional training programmes to impact significantly on teachers' instructional and managerial effectiveness in the classroom. From the Caribbean, this paper reports a small-scale project involving (1) the collection of research data by trainees themselves (on their students' perceptions of the dimensions of peer group popularity and unpopularity) and (2) the subsequent utilization of the findings in the psychology component of a programme for graduate secondary teachers to both enhance their understanding of theoretical issues and their practical awareness of classroom dynamics.

HELPING CARIBBEAN TEACHER TRAINEES TO UNDERSTAND THEIR STUDENTS

Introduction and Local Background to the Study

The research reported in this paper was conducted in the Caribbean island nation of Barbados. Barbados is a politically independent member of the Commonwealth, and has a populations of approximately a quarter of a million people mostly of African descent. Relative to many of its eastern Caribbean neighbours, it has a fairly diversified economy and a good public utilities and social services infrastructure. Free compulsory schooling is provided from 5 to 16 years. At present, 21 government schools, plus a number of small private institutions, cater for a secondary level student population of approximately 26,000.

The Diploma in Education programme of the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies provides the professional training of graduate secondary teachers in Barbados.[1] Places are also available for a few candidates from other English-speaking eastern Caribbean territories. The programme was established in 1973, and is broadly based on the British graduate training model, although its current functioning differs from the U.K. norm in certain respects. Most notably, students enter our programme having already taught for a shorter or longer period, and the course operates c part-time in-service, rather than a full-time pre-service basis. Student teachers continue working with a full or nearly full load at their own schools, and after a full-time summer orientation session attend classes on a one day per week release scheme for a period of one academic year. Typically, the annual intake is between 25 and 35 students, of whom 4-5 will come from countries other than Barbados.

In the most recent (June 1990) External Examiner's Report on the U.W.I. Diploma programme, it was emphasized that programme development must focus on, "the need to stress the development of the 'reflective practitioner' rather than the academic study of education". The fact that (as practised in the Caribbean) the Diploma is addressed mainly to mature students of whom the majority have had some pre-training experience was also highlighted.[2]

Over the past year the Faculty of Education at Cave Hill has been conducting a formal appraisal exercise concerned with the future development of the Diploma programme. Over a somewhat longer period, however, ways of improving the educational psychology component have been explored. One of the strategies adopted has been to conduct small-scale research studies in Barbados and neighbouring territories (which also serves the purposes of increasing the limited data base in psychology in the English-speaking Caribbean) and to experiment with ways of using these data with trainee teachers. This paper details the conduct of one such activity.

Theoretical and Research Background to the Study

Content of the Psychology Component in Teacher Education Programmes

In literature relating to education in both developed and developing societies, one can find evidence over the past decade of a certain "crisis of confidence" regarding the professional training of teachers. Most fundamentally, the debate asks whether professional training makes any significant difference to classroom performance and, therefore, whether it should be conceived of as a mandatory, or even desirable, employment prerequisite (see, e.g., Grossman, 1989; Guthrie, 1982).

Although retention of formal training seems currently favoured, there is nevertheless a widespread feeling that it needs to be "improved". But what changes, precisely, are critical ? How exactly are we to use (typically limited) resources more efficiently and effectively ? With regard to the psychology component of programmes, and with reference to current operational conditions in Barbados, the following issues have been central to attempts to deal with these concerns.

Peterson, Clark and Dickson (1990) have recently addressed the need for basic re-assessment of course content. They note (p. 324):

> The content and methods of educational psychology courses seem to be determined largely by the scope and sequence of educational psychology textbooks, which seem to reflect a static conception of educational psychology as a 'foundation' in teacher education. [emphasis added]

In the Caribbean, concerns about content relevance may be considered even more acute given our continuing heavy reliance on imported texts. There is a serious need for more

regional research, so that quality local materials can be produced.

This does not, however, imply that Carribean research institutions must only seek to replicate overseas studies or follow traditional research methodologies, for one may currently observe widespread disenchantment with the present or future usefulness of the preeminent process-product experimental paradigm (e.g. Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1990). There is also dissatisfaction with the way in which findings have tended to be presented to teachers as facts which they are unqualified to challenge (Floden & Klinzing, 1990) - a problem compounded by the concurrent devaluation of a knowledge base for teaching derived from the questions teachers themselves want to ask and the interpretive frames they use to understand and improve their own classroom practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990).

In psychology, as in other components of training programmes, a major consequence of this discontent has been the recent proliferation of courses adopting "reflective teaching" as a basic philosophy or guiding principle (Calderhead, 1989). However, some writers think there is still too much emphasis on the cognitive at the expense of affective aspects of learning to teach. McNamara (1990), for example, comments that the notion of the "reflective teacher" has been advocated mainly because it requires that teachers display precisely those qualities of mind which the intellectual approves of (p. 149). Such "academic tokenism", he argues, may do little to promote effective classroom functioning. Greater orientation towards moral and affective aspects of teaching, using research and training methodologies to improve teachers' empathetic understanding of students may be a more fruitful approach (e.g. Black & Phillips, 1982; Richardson, 1990). In this spirit, Zeichner and Liston (1987) have argued the need for training to highlight the development within teachers of

> . . .a sensitivity to the needs of students with diverse intellectual, racial, physical and social characteristics and [the] ability to play an active role in developing a respect for individual differences within their classrooms and schools. (p. 25)

In support of such a philosophy one may also note an increase of research interest in the student perspective. Nuthall and Alton-Lee (1990), for example, argue strongly that when research approaches the classroom only through the eyes of the teacher (or teacher trainer, or school administrator) there is the danger that social and personal variables known to have

powerful effects on the experience of individual students will be overlooked. Moreover, such an approach may not only provide new dimensions to the discussion of educational issues but may in some instances contribute significantly to their reconceptualization. For example, the studies of Lewis and Lovegrove have promoted new thinking about classroom management by suggesting that meeting students' preferences with regard to sanctions, rather than using punishments students' find most unpleasant, may lead to a more productive classroom climate (e.g. Lewis & Lovegrove, 1987). Increasing focus on students' perceptions of schooling is already a feature of educational research within the Caribbean (e.g. Newton, 1986; Payne, 1987).

In summary, the issues highlighted above have dealt with the need to reassess course content - and, in the process, to reexamine certain entrenched notions regarding methodological validity in educational research. Above all else, it seems essential to pay more attention to the ideas, beliefs and feelings of teachers themselves and those of their students. While trying to pursue this objective on our own Diploma programme, teachers in the class of 1986/87 expressed an interest in exploring the notion of "peer pressure" in their schools. One of the topics they identified for research was to examine students' perceptions of what makes Barbadian adolescents popular or unpopular with their peers.

Overview of Research on Peer Group Status

Although Rawlins and Holl (1987) have suggested that "popularity" is a somewhat mythical term in adolescence - perhaps akin to "success" in adulthood - research seems to indicate that within a given societal (or school) context at a given time, adolescents have a fairly clear notion of which qualities are more likely to contribute to high or low peer group status. Within western industrialized societies over the past three decades, research has suggested that aspects of <u>physical appearance</u> - height, weight, shape, facial characteristics - are most unambiguously linked to level of general social acceptance (e.g. Horowitz, 1967; Kleck, Richardson & Ronald, 1974; Lerner, 1969; Weisfeld, Bloch & Ivers, 1983). Additionally, good grooming and fashionable dressing appear increasingly crucially linked to dominance in adolescent girls (Weisfeld, Bloch & Ivers, 1984). As Hamachek (1980)

pointed out, it is the immediate availability of information about appearance which contributes to its salience in this regard. Lerner and Gellert (1969) have reported a "consistent aversion to chubiness" in children as young as five years of age, and Baum and Forehand (1984) observed that overweight sixth and seventh graders both dispensed and received more negative peer interaction than did those of average weight.

Athletic prowess is obviously linked in many ways to physical size and shape and, particularly in north American culture, seems equally unambiguously related to popularity (Butcher, 1986; Horowitz, 1967; Weisfeld et al., 1984). Physical appearance is also linked to sexual attractiveness, although the relationship between actual sexual activity/experience and peer group popularity seems less straightforward, and may differ for males and females (Newcomer, Udry & Cameron, 1983).

The relationship between intelligence, academic sucess and peer status seems yet more ambivalent. Whether high ability/achievement is linked with acceptance or rejection may vary at different age levels, or be dependent upon interaction with other personal traits (Butcher, 1986; Conger & Petersen, 1984; Hamacheck, 1980). Alternatively, it is suggested that intellectual qualities are more critically linked to acceptability for admission into friendship groups than to general peer status (Weisfeld et al., 1983).

Focussing primarily on unpopular students, Kennedy (1990) has also emphasized the need to examine the complexity of criteria which may inform peer judgements. Sociometric studies tending to exclusively highlight poor social skills development as the reason why children become ignored, neglected or rejected may have inappropriately restricted approaches to intervention:

> If attractiveness and reputation are factors in peer status, then perhaps our efforts to teach children. . .social skills. . .are less adequate than we would like to believe in improving a child's social status. All potentially important factors contributing to low sociometric status should be examined before concluding that deficits in social skills are the central problem. (Kennedy, 1990, p. 234)

In summary, although there is considerable data available on the topic of peer group status, many questions remain unanswered. Within developing countries the picture may be further complicated by the fact that determinants of popularity are derived both from

traditional norms and from those of foreign cultures to which young people are increasingly exposed via the mass media. Characteristics historically valued in the local society (large physical size, for example, as an indicator of wealth and fertility) may be perceived differently within the influential overseas culture (see, e.g., Olowu, 1983). Moreover, within any society, this kind of information requires regular updating if it is to be of maximum value to educational practitioners and counsellors.

The School Survey

Method

A total of 272 students, comprising intact classes from 10 of the 21 government secondary schools in Barbados, participated. Of these, 155 were girls and 117 boys; 153 were aged 12-14 years and 119 aged 15-17 years. A few students only completed part of the task, and exact numbers for sex/age subgroups are indicated in the tables.

Data were collected under group conditions during normal school hours by teachers who were enrolled in the Diploma in Education programme. Students were provided with paper and asked to respond in an open-ended manner to four questions posed orally by the teacher: What do you think makes a male (female) student popular (unpopular) at this school ? Teachers in five schools were instructed to ask questions about male students first and female students second, and those in the other five schools to use the reverse order. Responses were submitted anonymously, with students indicating only their sex and age.

Results

Table 1 here

The great majority of comments on popular students could be assigned to one of 20 usefully discrete categories, and these are presented in order of frequency of mention in Table 1. If the categories are ranked, a fairly high positive correlation is obtained between rankings for popular male and popular female characteristics (rho= +0.754, $p<0.01$) implying that popularity is defined quite similarly for the two sexes. Nevertheless, figures

would also suggest that being good at sports is more strongly associated with peer group popularity for boys, and having a "pleasant personality" is more salient for girls.

Chi-square was used to test for differences in the views expressed by students on the basis of sex and age. In descriptions of popular boys, girls were significantly more likely than boys themselves to mention good looks, physique and grooming/dressing, having good manners, a nice voice and "style", and being kind and helpful. Boys, on the other hand, referred more frequently than girls to having money/rich parents. Taking the sexes together, older students mentioned having money, being badly behaved or showing off more frequently than younger students did.

In descriptions of popular girls there were no significant sex differences in references to physical attractiveness except that girls referred more frequently to hairstyle. Girls were also more likely than boys to identify popular girls as having "style" or being badly behaved; boys were again more likely than girls to link having money to popularity. Older students moreso than younger ones identified good looks and having a nice voice in their descriptions; they were also more likely to link both good manners and bad behaviour with high status.

Table 2 here

Table 2 identifies the most frequently mentioned characteristics of unpopular male and female students. If categories are ranked and compared there is again a fairly high positive correlation (rho =+0.727, $p<0.01$); however, disobedience and "foolishness" were more commonly cited as contributors to boys' unpopularity than to girls'.

All significant sex differences are in the direction of these attributes being mentioned more frequently by girls than by boys. Younger students more frequently mentioned poor physique, lack of intelligence, and bad manners as characteristics of unpopular boys, and poor physique, having the "wrong" hairstyle, and disobedience as characteristics of unpopular girls. Older students were more likely than younger ones to link shyness with unpopularity in both sexes, to rate use of bad language a feature of unpopular boys, and being too well behaved as a cause of unpopularity in girls.

Taking Tables 1 and 2 together, it would seem that body shape features as a more prominent determinant of peer popularity for girls than for boys - having a good or "sexy" figure is associated with high status while being fat or having "no shape" can contribute to unpopularity. Moreover, the data suggest that while both sexes consider body shape important in the rating of girls, only girls seem to pay much attention to this feature when rating boys.

The data also highlight some ambiguities. In particular, they suggest that disobedience and bad behaviour can, for both sexes, be seen as contributing to either popularity or unpopularity. For girls, having a reputation for flirting and sexual promiscuity (in local parlance, being "worthless") may also be perceived as having either positive or negative repercussions; being intelligent or hard-working is similarly perceived somewhat ambivalently for boys.

Examination of the comments of individual students indicates that some conceptualizations were more complex or multifaceted than others. It also reinforces the point that both "good" and "bad" behaviour - from an adult perspective - can enhance one's popularity or, equally, contribute to unpopularity. The following brief selection of student responses (original grammar and spelling retained) attempts to illustrate these points:

Popular Boys

> A boy is popular by good looking, by quiet, by come first in class all the time, by how brave he is, and if his parent is rich. (Younger Boy)
>
> Their intelligence and they have the final word on usually everything. (Younger Boy)
>
> The way how he dress. Good looking. Shiny teeth. Hair comb well. Have a lot of money. Must be smart. (Older Boy)
>
> What makes a boy popular in this school is when they make a minace of them self. (Older Boy)
>
> His looks, if he is good at any sports, and how he handles himself. (Younger Girl)
>
> Boys who interfere with girls, behave disorderly, and maybe always landing up with the headteacher. (Younger Girl)
>
> His handsome looks and if he is a bad behave boy, or if he is a very brilliant guy. (Older Girl)
>
> Fights, telling the teacher off, and if he is also cute. (Older Girl).

Popular Girls

If she is bright and good looking and can run fast. (Younger Girl)

If she is pretty, worthless, shapely, sexy, always talking about sex, dresses revealing, and has lots of men. (Younger Girl)

Good manners, excellent behaviour, representation for the school. (Older Girl)

Her wild and rude behaviour and getting into a lot of trouble doing a lot of rudeness at school with boys. (Older Girl)

Legs, hips and shape of her body. (Younger Boy)

the way they walk, the way they talk, see they move they bat side [backside]. (Younger Boy)

Her big hips because they have big men for boyfriends. (Older Boy)

What makes a girl popular at this school is if she is the head girl and is very scrick [strict] with people. (Older Boy)

Unpopular Boys

The nasty words in his mouth. And also picking on younger girls. (Younger Boy)

Things which make boys unpopular are:- good behaviour. (Younger Boy)

He does not talk with anyone, don't take part in any events, and he don't like nobody. (Older Boy)

Dressing old and nasty, bad behaviour, unrespectable. (Older Boy)

A common characteristic of unpopular boys at this school is their manners. They do not have any. (Younger Girl)

immature, act weird like a nerd and don't talk to girls. (Younger Girl)

Mainly you find that the boy who is very intelligent is very unpopular. The other boys will say well, he's a scholar, he don't mix with us. And the girls don't want him, they want the ones that everybody know. (Older Girl)

If he is a nice boy, keep quiet, and don't give no trouble to no teacher. (Older Girl)

Unpopular Girls

> For a girl to be unpopular she has to be very untidy, not very active and not very intelligent. (Younger Girl)
>
> Girls are unpopular because they do not take a pride in them self, they are dirty and unpleasant and are roud [rude] to boys. (Younger Girl)
>
> When she ignores boys that whistle to her. (Older Girl)
>
> You'll find that girls who carried along themselves orderly and nice are unpopular because the other girls are jealous of them. (Older Girl)
>
> Bad looks, bad figure, and quietness. (Younger Boy)
>
> Does no school work, "Got more man than the sea got sand". (Younger Boy)
>
> Gossipping, interference, maliciousness. Or fat, ugly, dress badly. (Older Boy)
>
> If she is worthless, don't care about anyone but herself, like asking people for money, pushing herself up to big experience people. (Older Boy)

In-Class Use of the Survey with Teacher Trainees

Methodology

Data from the school survey outlined above - Tables 1 and 2 and a much-expanded selection of individual students' responses - have been used with the trainees who collected them and with subsequent groups on the Diploma programme.

Typically, the activity has begun with an introduction to certain relevant theoretical constructs and research findings, and trainees have then worked in small groups with the survey data to (a) identify the main findings, and (b) consider possible teaching implications. Over the following week, trainees complete a summary sheet on which they outline what they personally consider the major implications of the data for the school adjustment of individual students, students' general attitudes to school and overall school climate, teacher-student relationships, class management, guidance and counselling, and/or any other aspects of schooling. Summaries are then used in the next class to inform a plenary discussion, in which the findings of other research studies are once again incorporated and critically considered.

Subjectively, trainees have always reported this exercize to be both interesting and professionally useful. A more objective attempt to assess the activity suggests the following aspects and outcomes to be the most important.

Major Outcomes

Firstly, the data serve to underscore the importance of physical appearance as a determinant of general peer status. Trainees note that both relatively "changeable" features (such as dress, hairstyle, grooming) and relatively unchangeable features (such as skin colour, height, facial characteristics, body build) are involved in assessment. However appraisal, even when positive, is often rather crudely sexual and does not seem to necessarily imply respect for the "popular" individual (particularly in boys' descriptions of girls). In the context of current concern about adolescent sexual activity in the Caribbean, trainees note that (generally speaking) sexuality - whether relating to physique, style of dress, or social reputation - seems to be more salient in the rating of girls than of boys, and in a rather ambivalent manner, as suggested in other studies (e.g. Newcomer et al., 1983).

Why does physical appearance play such a preeminent role ? Our discussions have considered the fact of the immediate visibility of an individual's physical appearance (Hamachek, 1980), and that Barbadian students also tend to place great emphasis on such factors in their descriptions of popular and unpopular teachers - some of the implications of which have been considered elsewhere (Payne, 1987). On the other hand, we have considered the data as reflecting youthful preoccupations often underestimated by adults, with reference to Elkind's notion that adolescents spend much time constructing or reacting to an "imaginary audience" (e.g. Elkind & Bowen, 1979).

Trainees report the findings have particularly caused them to consider the extent to which adults, and by extension the mass media, may transmit to young people the view that physical attractiveness is a trait valued more highly than other personal qualities. They have also questioned whether teachers and administrators sufficiently understand how students may perceive school dress regulations, given that dealing with breaches of dress code seem widely acknowledged to occupy an inordinate amount of staff time and lead to disproportionate

levels of student resentment. Teachers say the data also cause them to reflect on whether they themselves typically display negative reactions to unattractive or overweight students, which may help to promote similar negativity from peers. They are encouraged to consider these possibilities with particular regard to research suggesting that, at primary and lower secondary levels at least, teachers' perceptions of students' physical attractiveness may influence expectations of intellectual ability (e.g. Lerner, Lerner & Tubman, 1989; Marwit, 1982; Villimez, Eisenberg & Carroll, 1986; Vosk, Forehand, Parker & Rickard, 1982).

Secondly, trainees note that while intelligence, working hard and performing well academically feature fairly strongly as "popular" characteristics, both poor performance and working hard may be negatively evaluated, and somewhat moreso for boys than for girls. In addition, however, examination of students' actual responses indicates that how traits are combined within the individual may determine the manner in which his or her intellectual prowess (or the lack of it) is evaluated. In particular the data suggest that among older students being too quiet, shy, and unwilling to participate in school activities other than class work is likely to promote a negative overall perception.

Trainees have discussed these points in the context of the academically elitist Barbadian education system which allocates students to different secondary schools at age 11 largely on the basis of performance in the Common Entrance Examination (CEE). Although Conger and Petersen (1984) generally refute the notion that within U.S. schools being "too intelligent" can make you unpopular, there is considerable evidence within our data of anti-achievement peer pressure. Adjustment and motivational difficulties now being increasingly recognized as linked to school transition and specific differences in the functioning of primary and early secondary classrooms (Eccles & Midgley, 1990) may well be predicted to be especially acute within a system such as ours. Trainees are therefore encouraged to consider how negative peer pressure may influence the outcome of any strategies they themselves might use to motivate poorly performing students, particularly in schools where CEE results already have them labelled as "failures".

Thirdly, the data have served quite powerfully to force trainees to face the fact that, despite students' generally stated disapproval of unfriendliness and bad manners, individuals who cause teachers trouble and/or who are generally badly behaved in school are quite likely to be popular, at least with some part of the student body, whereas those who "never mess around" are not. Although most teachers presumably know this already, seeing written descriptions of popular and unpopular students in front of them seems to help to bring this dilemma into sharper focus. Although our trainees often interpret these findings as reflecting changes in attitudes towards disobedience and aggression within wider Barbadian society, they are also challenged to try and remember what it is like to be an adolescent. In other words, although programmes are currently conerned to produce the "reflective teacher", these data seem to reveal that many of our trainees - particularly the older ones - tend to have a very selective memory of their younger days; dealing with these findings appears to promote their ability to put themselves in their students' place and gain a clearer picture of what has, in fact, changed and what has stayed the same.

We have also used these data to explore trainees' feelings towards socially defiant and less disruptive socially immature behaviour, and the extent to which they believe such behaviours to be controllable by students (Cunningham & Suguwara, 1988). Considering the findings from the perspective of the socially defiant student, we have discussed the possibility that even if such behaviour is labelled "deviant" by school authorities the lack of negative evaluation of that label by the student himself/herself and peers may not result in lowered self esteem (Rosenberg, 1979; Stager, Chassin & Young, 1983). Thus, trainees' comments sometimes indicate a realization that "popular" badly behaved students may be more likely than unpopular miscreants to publicly challenge the teacher in class, because they are confident of the support of their peers. Trainees have also noted that bad behaviour seems to be more strongly associated with positive peer evaluation at the older age level, and considered the possible effects on younger students in terms of their anticipatory socialization into peer-approved modes of behaviour in the upper school.

Generally, therefore, feedback from trainees suggests that the process of analysing these data has served to emphasize the need for teachers to have a better understanding of

how various traits and talents may combine to determine peer group status, as well the need to take a variety of possible explanatory variables into account when dealing with classroom misbehaviour.

As currently constituted, the Diploma programme at Cave Hill does not include a course in guidance and counselling. However, activities such as the one being discussed in this paper have been useds to encourage trainees to give some thought to guidance and counselling issues. In the present context, for example, we have discussed the fact that previous research seems to suggest that the intervention of "perceptive adults" is crucial to improving the school adjustment of unpopular children (Roopnarine & Honig, 1985). However, there is also increasing recognition that inappropriate behaviour can occur not only because the student is deficient in specific social skills but because of defensive strategies adopted in response to negative peer evaluation of other personal attributes (Kafer, 1982; Kennedy, 1990). Some trainees' comments indicate that they recognize the need to understand the purpose of students' inappropriate behaviour more fully, which includes a clearer appreciation from the student's perspective of the advantages and disadvantages of behaving in ways approved by the teacher.

Additionally, however, some trainees have suggested that, given some of the characteristics currently associated with high peer status, counselling may be needed for some popular students also. They identify this as particularly necessary for those who seem to be overly concerned with their appearance and/or sexuality - "they see school not as a place to learn but somewhere to be admired" - and for those whose "fame" lies in their ability to cause trouble for teachers or bully younger students. Thus in addition to developing the conceptual distinction between isolated/neglected and rejected unpopular students, they are also working towards a distinction between what might be called (from an adult perspective at least) "constructive" and "notorious" popularity.

Further understanding of how teachers themselves react differently to, and hold different expectations for, these various "types" of popular and unpopular adolescents is an important objective in our continuing exploration of these issues. Additionally, however, we must also help teachers to consider the relationship between general peer status and membership of

friendship groups, and the importance of stable friendships in determining students' reactions to wider peer pressures (Berndt & Perry, 1990; Rawlins & Holl, 1987).

Conclusion

Although some of the problems confronting classroom teachers will vary within and between cultures, many of the day-to-day demands are remarkably similar in very different national and social settings (Broadfoot, 1990). Thus, in literature discussing ways of improving teacher training in both developed and developing societies, similar recommendations are emerging. Most notably, it is argued that more attention needs to be paid to the affective and moral factors which influence teachers' attitudes towards, and expectations of, their students (e.g. Guthrie, 1982; Richardson, 1990; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). Inasmuch as similar problems are identified, possible solutions may be usefully shared.

The kind of activity described in this paper developed as a response to suggestions in the international literature as well as to felt needs emerging from trainee evaluations of our own programme here in Barbados - which particularly highlighted a desire to see the local research content of the programme increased. The activity is representative of several exercizes currently incorporated into the psychology component of the programme which use data collected from students, teachers, administrators and/or parents. Topics covered include

- adolescent self-perceptions (what I like most about myself/what I'd like to change)
- adolescents' hopes and fears for the future
- teachers' and students' views on the importance of various educational objectives
- teachers' students' and administrators' views on the advantages and disadvantages of coeducational secondary schooling
- students' views on misbehaviour and school disciplinary strategies
- teacher stress in secondary schools
- adolescents' and parents' views on the influence of foreign television programmes

In terms of increasing the overall relevance of course content, there seems little doubt that the inclusion of local data has had a positive impact. Specifically, it seems to help trainees not just to gain a better grasp of major theoretical constructs but also to be in a better position to critically assess them (a critical attitude is generally encouraged, although not always easy to evoke). Also it helps to convince teachers of the potential value of research in informing local educational debate - which can be easily manipulated in a small community by the unsubstantiated anecdotal views of so-called "experts" - while at the same time demonstrating that research is something they can be a part of, or even initiate. By frequently emphasizing qualitative as well as quantitative approaches to data analysis, the activities have helped to break down some teachers' preconceptions about what research "ought to be", while at the same time tending to promote in others a less fearful attitude towards statistical procedures.

Obviously the Diploma programme as a whole needs to develop a coordinated strategy to assess its impact on teacher behaviour and student outcomes. However, in the exam-oriented Barbadian school system much work first needs to be done at the national level to produce a clearer articulation of educational priorities. For the present we are guided primarily by the recommendations of our external assessors and our own educational philosophies.

With regard to the psychology component, there is as yet little real "proof" that the approach outlined in this paper is in fact helping to produce the more "reflective teacher" that our current external examiner hopes for, although its stated objective certainly is to produce teachers who not only reflect on their own beliefs, attitudes and behaviours but who are also genuinely concerned to gain a better appreciation of, and respect for, those of their students.

To date, volunteered feedback from teachers on the programme over the past five years suggests that, from their subjective standpoint at least, the approach <u>is</u> proving of value in providing them with new insights into contemporary youthful preoccupations and some timely reminders of their own school experiences. It is also seen as highlighting in a non-threatening manner some of the ways in which teachers may themselves

unwittingly contribute to classroom management problems and more general difficulties in interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. With specific regard to the activity described in this paper, for example, teachers have reported a new understanding of the fact that "adolescents are being pulled in many directions" and that the resulting tension may have a detrimental effect on school climate. They have commented that, "what we have to do is make our curriculum more person centred, and see that person as a whole spiritual, mental and physical being", that "there is a need for schools to tackle the psychological and affective needs of students and not treat them as 'learning machines' ", and that " the pursuit of excellence as currently practised in Barbados should be devalued so that fewer students are made to feel failures".

At this subjective level, the outcomes of using this approach seem to be in the desired direction, and to impact positively on the whole "climate" of the course. It is to be hoped that in future years it will be possible to report on a more objective and comprehensive assessment of our efforts.

FOOTNOTES

1 The Faculty of Education also has overall responsibility for the certification of students on nongraduate teacher training programmes run by Teachers' Colleges in the English-speaking eastern Caribbean.

2 The average age of students on the 1990/91 Diploma programme (n=30) is 33 years (range 26-51 years), and their average pre-training teaching experience is 7 years (range 1-23 years).

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Table 1: Characteristics of popular male and female students

Characteristics	Popular Boys						Popular Girls					
	YB (n=64)	OB (n=50)	YG (n=89)	OG (n=47)	Difference (χ^2) by sex	Difference (χ^2) by age	YB (n=64)	OB (n=53)	YG (n=89)	OG (n=66)	Difference (χ^2) by sex	Difference (χ^2) by age
1. Good looks/handsome/pretty	52	44	71	55	7.56**	-	66	47	74	50	-	13.39***
2. Good grooming/Dresses well	28	28	34	57	5.20*	-	38	26	37	39	-	-
3. Intelligent/good at school work	22	26	33	15	-	-	16	17	23	17	-	-
4. Good shape/figure/muscular	9	-	23	19	13.39***	-	25	26	28	21	-	-
5. Carries him/herself with "style"	3	14	27	23	13.46***	-	14	11	27	32	10.18**	-
6. Sexy/attracts the opposite sex	13	20	18	11	-	-	19	34	24	14	-	-
7. Good manners/respectful	19	14	24	34	3.92*	-	16	6	23	12	-	5.71*
8. Good character, personality	13	10	10	13	-	-	30	15	26	21	-	-
9. Good at sports	25	24	19	11	-	-	11	8	5	3	-	-
10. Badly behaved/trouble-maker	17	20	5	21	-	5.73*	5	9	1	33	4.18*	26.50***
11. Nice/"right" hair style	11	2	11	17	-	-	3	2	15	12	9.94**	-
12. Leader/Active in school affairs	11	4	5	9	-	-	6	4	7	9	-	-
13. Outgoing	5	4	8	-	-	-	5	8	10	3	-	-
14. Bad (sexual) reputation,"worthless"	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	21	12	5	-	-
15. Rich parents/Money/Car	8	28	3	2	13.94***	7.75*	2	8	1	-	3.98*	-
16. Nice voice/Speaks properly	2	2	11	9	4.98*	-	2	4	2	12	-	6.07*
17. Kind/helpful/generous	5	-	11	6	7.56**	-	-	6	7	6	-	-
18. Shows off	-	12	-	9	-	16.29***	3	2	-	6	-	-
19. Special talent (unspecified)	2	-	3	-	-	-	3	2	6	5	-	-
20. Good sense of humour	-	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	-

Note: Figures indicate percentages of students in each group (Young Boys/Old Boys/Young Girls/Old Girls) mentioning that characteristic.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 2: Characteristics of unpopular male and female students

Characteristics	Unpopular Boys						Unpopular Girls					
	YB (n=64)	OB (n=49)	YG (n=89)	OG (n=47)	Difference by sex	(χ^2) by age	YB (n=64)	OB (n=52)	YG (n=88)	OG (n=65)	Difference by sex	(χ^2) by age
1. Ugly, not good-looking	30	35	46	34	-	-	36	46	42	22	-	-
2. Quiet, shy	25	55	17	49	-	27.30***	19	21	21	46	4.51*	7.94**
3. Poor grooming/Untidy dressing	31	25	29	32	-	-	22	15	30	35	5.77*	-
4. Bad manners/disrespectful	34	16	29	19	-	5.76*	23	8	32	28	6.70*	-
5. Disobedient	31	18	18	21	-	-	22	14	17	5	-	5.98*
6. Uses bad language/swears	9	2	5	30	-	5.52*	14	6	8	26	-	-
7. Bad (sexual) reputation,"worthless"	3	-	9	15	8.28**	-	19	19	17	11	-	-
8. Short/Fat, "no shape"	-	-	16	-	12.49***	9.32**	19	14	25	6	-	8.03**
9. Unkind/malicious	8	8	9	2	-	-	14	12	14	5	-	-
10. Aggressive	9	10	10	6	-	-	5	4	9	6	-	-
11. Poor personal hygiene	2	10	6	9	-	-	6	10	8	8	-	-
12. Unintelligent/poor school work	14	4	8	-	-	6.08*	9	6	7	5	-	-
13. Too well behaved	3	2	3	13	-	-	3	6	2	17	-	9.32**
14. Scared of/don't talk to opposite sex	5	2	2	2	-	-	6	8	7	3	-	-
15. Foolish, weird	3	2	15	6	7.21**	-	-	-	3	2	-	-
16. "Wrong" hair style	3	6	6	6	-	-	5	-	5	-	-	5.39*
17. Too intelligent	-	-	2	11	4.35*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$